

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5139

As of February 12, 2003

Title: An act relating to remedial postsecondary education.

Brief Description: Requiring school districts to provide or pay for state-supported remedial education at institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Senator Carlson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/13/03.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Jean Six (786-7423)

Background: Colleges and universities all over the country provide remedial courses for under-prepared students. During the last few years a growing concern has emerged over the costs of these courses to the students and to the state both in time and in money. While students who have been away from the academic environment for a number of years, or who are learning English as a second language, or facing other mitigating factors might need to complete some pre-college coursework, concern has been raised about the number of students right out of high school who are not prepared to do college level work. Many believe the high school diploma should demonstrate a readiness to succeed in college coursework.

A recent report from the state of California indicates that the California State University system threw out 8.2 percent of its freshmen last year for failing to master basic English or math skills, the highest rate in the four years it has tracked such dismissals.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges has issued a report about the role of pre-college course enrollment. A similar report about such enrollments in Washington's four-year institutions has been coordinated by the Council of Presidents and issued by the WSU Social and Economics Sciences Research Center.

Summary of Bill: School districts provide remedial education for high school graduates within three years of high school graduation or pay the cost of providing state-supported remedial classes for these recent high school graduates who need to improve their competency in pre-college skills.

If the school district provides the remedial instruction, students pay no tuition. If the school district chooses to pay the higher education institution to provide the necessary pre-college instruction, the school district pays the college an amount equal to the cost of instruction. The school district may not access any financial aid for the students and may not use any state funds. In addition, the college may not charge tuition to the students.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is added to the list of agencies to receive data about students within three years of their graduation from a Washington high school.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 24, 2003.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.